

JUNE 25, 2002

**SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS COALITION WORKING FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- I want to thank Representative John Conyers for his tremendous leadership in the fight for universal health care and for ending poverty in America. I am grateful for your leadership, passion, and inspiration.

I also want to thank the many advocates - organizations and individuals - who are supporting our health care resolution and demanding that our nation join the rest of the industrialized world in guaranteeing access to health care as a right, not a privilege.

In particular, I want to thank Margy Heldring of America's Health Together and Ken Frisof of UHCAN. These two organizations have put together a coalition of faith-based, provider, consumer, labor, disability and senior organizations that are bound together by a common commitment to health care justice.

I serve on the Government Reform Committee, which has been charged with writing the bill to create the Department of Homeland Security. We are all joined when it comes to defending the security of our country. Unfortunately, we are not as united in Congress when it comes to protecting the health security of children, adults and families.

We are here today to say that it is time for Congress and the White House to stop accepting what is unacceptable.

It is unacceptable that our nation leads the world in terms of spending in every category but ranks 37th in terms of meeting the health care needs of our people. It is unacceptable that access to health care is discriminatory and unjust.

We discriminate every day on the basis of income - if you can't afford it, you don't get it. We discriminate every day on the basis of employment - if you're lucky enough to have a job with affordable health benefits, you're in luck. If you lose that job, you're in trouble. After September 11, we learned not just that our nation was insecure, but that thousands of laid-off workers and their families were insecure in their health care coverage.

We discriminate every day on the basis of health status. If you are one of the 1 in 4 Americans will suffer mental illness in your lifetime, be prepared for mental health disparity. We discriminate every day on the basis of race and ethnicity. African Americans and Latinos are more likely to be uninsured, to undergo preventable illnesses and die prematurely. Even if they are insured, they still face discrimination in getting access to top-of-the-line procedures.

This discrimination costs us dearly in many, many ways. It is not just a question of unfairness to individuals and their families. It actually costs us money to discriminate -

**it takes a lot of administrative costs and bureaucrats to manage this fragmented and dysfunctional system.□ And that is money that doesn't go into providing health care.**

**Our "system" puts profits ahead of people, discrimination ahead of fairness, the rights of health care CEOs ahead of the needs of doctors, nurses and patients.**

**H.Con.Resolution 99 would change that.□ It lays out a vision, but a vision that is not pie in the sky or out of reach.□ It is a vision that works in countries around the world where they spend fewer dollars and guarantee universal coverage without discrimination.□**

**We can make the vision of H.Con.Res. 99 a reality.□ The majority of Americans want to make sure that every person has the right to affordable, quality and comprehensive health care.□ We need to translate that majority view into a political movement.**